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SUBJECT: Scenesetter for A/S McMurray's visit to New Zealand:
Highlighting US-New Zealand Science Cooperation to Strengthen
Overall Ties

11. (SBU) Summary: The upcoming commemoration of the 50th anniversary of U.S. - New Zealand cooperation in Antarctic provides a terrific opportunity to strengthen NZ public understanding of the depth and significance of US-NZ scientific cooperation, an often unrecognized strength in our bilateral relationship. While much of our cooperation takes place in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, it focuses on fields that extend to global issues of concern to many New Zealanders, such as climate change, sustainable fisheries, and whale conservation. With 40 percent of New Zealand scientists maintaining active links to the U.S. science community, the United States is New Zealand's most vital scientific partner. Fifty percent of New Zealand's science effort is publicly-funded, and frequently involves ties with NASA, NOAA, NSF, USGS, and other USG agencies, making the bilateral science relationship a success story for government-to-government cooperation. End Summary.

Background

12. (SBU) The U.S. and New Zealand have had a science and technology cooperative agreement since 1974 (renewed in 1991), but bilateral scientific efforts began well before that, especially extensive cooperation in Antarctica starting in the International Geophysical Year (IGY) in 1957-58. The first U.S. science counselor to New Zealand, Dr. Paul Siple, was the science lead for the first U.S. team to winter-over at the South Pole. Whereas other aspects of the bilateral relationship have waxed and waned over the years, bilateral scientific cooperation, particularly that associated with Antarctica, has remained strong and constant. Regrettably, the New Zealand public remains largely unaware of this. The 50th anniversary of U.S. - New Zealand cooperation in Antarctica provides a valuable opportunity to highlight the relevance of the cooperative scientific effort, both for the underlying science itself as well as for the overall bilateral relationship.

Highlights of Current Cooperation

13. (SBU) Currently the United States and New Zealand are collaborating on a multinational Antarctic Drilling Project (ANDRILL) to investigate climate change over time. The Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) Network is a cooperative effort run by the National Science Foundation investigating ecological processes over long temporal and broad spatial scales. New Zealand scientists provide base data to the project. In another significant Antarctic project, the NZ and US Antarctic programs are collaborating to clean up the Cape Hallett Station site. Some of the artifacts from the site have been relocated to an exhibit at the Canterbury Museum, including living quarters and a magnetic dome.

14. (SBU) In October 2002, the U.S. and New Zealand initiated a Bilateral Climate Change Partnership to enhance and accelerate practical cooperation on climate change issues. The initial round of 26 projects was launched in 2003 and has grown to 35 projects in nine priority areas: climate change science, technology

development, greenhouse gas accounting in forestry and agriculture, engagement with business, emissions registries, cooperation with developing countries, climate change research in Antarctica, public education initiatives, and product & process standards. In fact, our cooperative work on the issue is more significant than New Zealand's climate change partnership with Australia (NZ's only other climate change partnership), which only has about ten active projects.

15. (SBU) Climate change is an issue that attracts a lot of attention with the New Zealand public, whose knowledge of U.S. policies of the issue is typically limited to our decision not to join the Kyoto Agreement. In July 2006, Foreign Minister Winston Peters appointed career diplomat Adrian Macey as New Zealand's first Climate Change Ambassador. Ambassador Macey led the New Zealand delegation to the very successful U.S. - New Zealand Climate change talks held in Washington during August 2006, but few Kiwis seemed to have noticed. The 50th Anniversary Celebrations will highlight our cooperation as a domestic news story, giving it a higher profile.

15. (SBU) While Antarctica and climate change have been the main areas of government-to-government science cooperation in recent years, other significant fields of scientific cooperation include agricultural, astronomy, biomedical and biochemical research, earth sciences, marine & zoological science, and mathematical & information sciences. More broadly, U.S. and New Zealand core ESTH policy interests and concerns align closely including those related to biodiversity and CITES, fisheries, forestry and whales. New Zealand strongly supports our position in the International Whaling Commission, even though at times this strains GNZ's otherwise close relationship with some Pacific Island nations.

The New Zealand Scientific Landscape

16. Research and development in New Zealand's economy has traditionally focused on primary sector products -- including agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting products -- which account for 72 percent of goods exports. Most primary sector research has been performed in public research institutions such as the government enterprise Crown Research Institutes (CRIs) and tertiary education organizations (TEOs) - which together account for nearly 70 percent of the R&D effort. More than 50 percent of New Zealand researchers are active in non-medical biological and allied sciences; of these most are concentrated at five of the nine CRIs, Massey and Lincoln universities, and the dairy multinational Fonterra.

17. For the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 fiscal years, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST), the financing arm of the New Zealand science program, has identified biosecurity, oceans, sustainable energy, and sustainable water as its highest priority areas. This additional focus will complement ongoing priorities for advanced materials, energy, information technology and agricultural biotechnology.

International Scientific Collaboration

18. International collaboration plays a vital role in New Zealand scientific research, and New Zealand scientific papers co-authored with overseas scientists have higher impact here (i.e., are cited more often) than papers authored solely by New Zealanders. The U.S. science community is New Zealand's most important science partner. Of New Zealand's 15,000 science researchers, 40 percent of them have relationships with U.S. researchers, compared to 30 percent with Australia, 28 percent with the United Kingdom, 14 percent with Germany, and 7 percent with France.

19. In December 2004, New Zealand appointed Dr. Brian Young, doctorate in behavioral neurology, as its first Science and Technology Counselor to the U.S. New Zealand has one other science counselor, assigned to Brussels and New Zealand's mission to the European Union. The Ministry of Research, Science, and Technology (MoRST) is also advancing plans for a third science counselor to be assigned to Beijing.

